

## INDIA'S SOFT POWER IMAGE: A NAGA PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Soft power as a concept is a very new phenomenon in the realm of sovereign state politics, popularized by Joseph Nye in the 1990s. Thence on, scholars, intellectuals and academicians have been making a serious effort to understand the enigmatic concept of power from various dimensions. Today, soft power is known by multiple names – attractive power, pull power, co-optive power, incentive power, gentle power, etc. The policy of soft power does not limit itself within the ambit of international relations. It is porous in the sense that the concept can also be used by a sovereign state in its dealing with internal problems. In order to leverage her soft power image, India must first efficiently demonstrate its sensitivity and capability in dealing with the prevailing various domestic issues. For instance, the Indian Government, can for a change employ more of soft power and less of hard power while dealing with the Naga peoples' movement for independence. In fact, in Nagaland, New Delhi had made use of 'soft power' concomitantly with 'hard power'. These two terms were more commonly understood by the Nagas as the 'carrot and stick' policy of the Central Government of India. The following theoretical research paper argues that of all the soft power resources that India possesses the culture of accommodating diversity acts as the most appealing pull factor. It also pontificates the importance of upholding the unique nature of maintaining harmony amidst diversity so as to strengthen India's soft power image globally as well as locally. Apropos to this, this article also makes an effort to theorise that the protracted Naga political conflict can find the most amiable solution in the spirit of plurality and also in examining it from the angle of soft power.

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict, Diversity, Foreign Policy, Nagas, Narendra Modi, Peace, Soft power, Tolerance

### INTRODUCTION

And stable political system; appealing foreign policy; etc. Attractive resources can effectively act as a pull-factor in impacting others behaviour, paving the way for one to carry out its agenda peaceably. Having said this, as Joseph Nye pointed out; the proof of power does not lie in the resources alone but much more in the ability to change the behaviour of others.<sup>1</sup> The essence of soft power is that whoever owns the right kind of resources and has the ability to maneuver these resources vigilantly keeping in view one's circumstance can sway the opposite party's thought process or decision making to its own advantage.

One can affect others' behaviour in three main ways: "by threatening coercion ("sticks"), by offering inducements ("carrots"), and by making others want what one wants."<sup>2</sup> The last method is what is generally understood as soft power. It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments and it mostly arises from

<sup>1</sup> Josephy S. Nye, Jr., "Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, No. 80, 1990, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., Wang Jisi, Richard Rosecrance and Gu Guoliang, "Hard Decisions on Soft Power: Opportunities and Difficulties for Chinese Soft Power", *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2009, p. 18.

attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.<sup>3</sup> "Soft power is not just what we can deliberately and consciously exhibit or put on display. It is rather how others see what we are, whether or not we are trying to show it to the world."<sup>4</sup> Nye located three primary resources of a country's soft power: culture (in places where it is attractive to others); political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad); and foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).<sup>5</sup> He also said that success of a country cannot be rated merely on the basis of military power but also on the ability to narrate a suitable attractive story that wins.<sup>6</sup>

For a country to be strong and prosperous, and to effectively influence the behaviour of others to get the desired outcome(s), it needs both hard and soft power. "Hard power is exercised; soft power is evoked."<sup>7</sup> Shashi Tharoor on why India, not China, is winning the soft power war stated: "Hard power without soft power stirs up resentment; soft power without hard power is a confession of weakness."<sup>8</sup> In 2003, Nye termed the art of learning better how to combine hard and soft power as "smart power" to represent the fact that soft power alone is not an effective power.<sup>9</sup> The core of smart power is the mutual reinforcement between hard and soft power so that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently.<sup>10</sup> Citing the lately diminished America's position globally, Ernest J. Wilson argued that the Bush administration's national security and foreign policies have not been smart, and, as a result, they have compromised the diplomatic and security interests of the United States, provoking unprecedented resentment around the world.<sup>11</sup>

India's soft power lies in proactively supporting the aspects and products of Indian society and culture that would be attractive to the world not in order directly to persuade others to support India, but rather to enhance India's intangible standing in their eyes.<sup>12</sup> In other words, India's soft power resources lie with its "great" civilisation. It is considered "great" because it was influenced by diverse factors and it not only incorporates but thrives on the spirit of diversity. In fact, *Anekantavada* which simply means "plurality" of ideas, viewpoints, approach, etc. has been the culture that has attracted many people towards India's way of life. Diversity simply indicates tolerance and accommodation of plural expressions. In actuality, upholding the ethos of 'unity in diversity' has enabled and reinforced all other soft power resources of India, such as democracy, yoga, spirituality, cuisine, film, songs, dances, etc., that have been acting as a powerful forces of attraction and influence to many foreign nationals.

Currently, India faces many domestic problems which frequently shook the ideology of 'unity in diversity'. Nagas struggle for sovereignty is one complex problem that negates the practicality of this ideology. In fact, Nagas do not even subscribe the notion that their conflict is simply the domestic problem of India as it also directly involves the Naga people residing in Myanmar. Thus, their problem is complicated! It is even more so because the Naga conflict is not just the mere law and order issue of India, rather it is the people's movement for sovereignty. It had been the grudge of the Nagas that

<sup>3</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, United States: Public Affairs, 2004, p. x.

<sup>4</sup> Shashi Tharoor, "India as a Soft Power", *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3/4, The Golden Thread: Essays in Honour of C. D. Deshmukh, Winter 2011-Spring 2012, p. 340.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 4, 2009, pp. 162-63.

<sup>7</sup> Shashi Tharoor, "Bollywood vs the Terracotta Army", *The World Today*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 2012, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, *Ibid.*, p. 32; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power", *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest J. Wilson III, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 616, March 2008, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Shashi Tharoor, "India as a Soft Power", *Ibid.*, p. 335.

New Delhi never really tried to understand and respect their differently asserted viewpoints on how they wanted to live their life. Nagas claimed that they are a “nation” built differently from the rest of the Indian population with a “unique history” and a different cultural life and political situation of their own. To that extend, their prevailing political conflict with New Delhi was strongly based on the notion that they are not Indians in any sense, not historically, politically, culturally, nor physically.

To contain the Nagas freedom movement, New Delhi adopted ruthless military method, otherwise preserve as the last resort. Excepting Mahatma Gandhi, most of the Indian leaders failed to see the wisdom in dealing with the recalcitrant Nagas peaceably. However, based on the most recent developments of the penning of the Naga peace deal on August 3, 2015, this paper hypothesizes that there is an adequate chance of settling the Naga dissension if the Indian leaders applied the soft power policy of non-violent peaceful approach, understanding and respect to Naga’s assertion.

### **Brief Highlights of the Naga Political Movement**

The Naga political movement that has begun before the independence of India is “one of the world’s oldest continuing armed conflicts, which is also one of the least known.”<sup>13</sup> The Nagas’ rejection to the idea that their land which was under a special dispensation during the British rule could simply pass into “Indian hands” at the end of the British colonialism<sup>14</sup> was the root cause of the Naga conflict. In other words, Nagas’ aspiration for self-determination, which means they themselves would determine their own political, administrative, cultural and socio-economic affairs, is the origin of the “Indo-Naga” problem. Based on the historical dimension of belonging to a different nation group, Naga commonly termed their movement as a “national movement”. They consider India as a foreign country, a colonial master who had trespassed into their land. The immediate result of the demand for independence by the Nagas was that it led to a warlike situation between the Nagas and the Central Government of India. For more than sixty years now the pressing issue of the Naga people had been that they have every right to live independently in their ancestral homeland. According to them, their territorial integrity had been violated again and again by the British, the Indian Government as well as the Myanmar Government in order to serve their vested political interests. As a result, the once compact area of the Nagas of approximately 120,000 sq km located between the tri-junction of India, Myanmar and China have been segregated and placed under various administrative set-ups. Today, in India, Nagas are located in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal and Assam and in Myanmar they are located in the Sagaing sub-division, the Kachin state and in the Somra Tract.

Contextualising Russia, Andrei P. Tsygankov elaborated that exploiting soft power is a double-edged sword in the sense that it can use soft power for defensive, as well as expansionist purposes.<sup>15</sup> Borrowing this context and applying it to the prevailing Naga political affairs in the Northeastern region of the Indian sub-continent, it can be asserted that the Indian Government had for long utilised soft power as an offensive as well as defensive tool even before the term was coined by Nye in 1990. The offence was mainly against the Nagas but the guard of defense was mainly to protect India’s image from being tarnished because of its human rights offense against the Nagas. The offensive/defensive debate of India’s soft power indicates the double standard attitude of New Delhi. In the early 1950s, on the one hand New Delhi

<sup>13</sup>Sanjib Baruah, “Confronting Constructionism: Ending India’s Naga War”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3, New Delhi: Sage Publication, May 2003, p. 321.

<sup>14</sup> *Op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, “If Not by Tanks, Then by Banks? The Role of Soft Power in Putin’s Foreign Policy”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 7, 2006, p. 1084.

under the premiership of Jawaharlal Nehru was proactively engaged in shaping the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) for peaceful co-existence, yet contemporaneously, Nagas were subjected to the worst kind of inhumane treatment because of their aspiration for “sovereignty”, the mutual respect of which was another principle of NAM. In fact, the 1950s was recorded as the “darkest era” in the annals of the Naga political movement. Another example of the double standard nature of New Delhi was that it was wrong for the Nagas to desire and endeavor for self-determination. Yet, India fervently supported the Tibetan’s right to freedom from the domination of China even giving refuge to the Tibetan people. India also strongly stood for the right of the Baluch people to be independent from the control of Pakistan, to the extent that even the editor-in-chief of the Times Now news channel, Arnab Goswami commented that “what happens in Baluchistan concerns every right thinking man”. If this statement is considered true for the Baluch people, it must also be true for the Naga people who have been suppressed for more than 60 years now. It is high time the Naga imbroglio prick the conscience of every right thinking Indian man. But the reality is quite different. The Indian leaders seem to know how to rectify the wrongs in other people’s courtyard, but they tend to ignore the problem happening in their own backyard.

### India’s Soft Power Display

Successive Indian Government tried to project the Indian culture as benign that has tolerance and respect for diversity as its foundation. In fact, India’s soft power lies in its culture of tolerating plural expression of its many identities.<sup>16</sup> “The Indian mind has been shaped by remarkably diverse forces, by ancient Hindu tradition, myth and scripture, by the impact of Islam and Christianity, by those centuries of British colonial rule and the result is unique.”<sup>17</sup> To influence the reasoning of others and to leverage its global image, India had been trying to present herself as the epitome of the world’s largest and greatest practicing democracy. In its effort to reinforce this paradigm domestically as well as globally, India claim to employ the spirit of democracy in all its dealing with socio-economic as well as political issues. Furthermore, India had been a staunch supporter of “multi-polarity” (there should be many superpowers) in lieu of “uni-polarity” (there should be only one superpower, the US). This important foreign policy shapes the preferences of many countries in favor of India.

Nye argues that soft power do not indicate weakness and a country that fails to incorporate it in their national strategy cannot become a strong world power.<sup>18</sup> To obtain a great power status, India had from time to time adjusted its foreign policy in apt with the ever transforming era of information and technology. Some subscribe the idea that of late, in order to be a smart country there seems to be a “shift in India’s foreign policy from non-alignment to alignment; from the goal of creating a multipolar world to endorsing the US concept of a unipolar world”, although India officially continues to adhere to non-alignment concept of a multipolar world.<sup>19</sup> Many do not doubt the notion that India has the potential to become a great world power but there are certain domestic elements which are clipping the wings of India from becoming the actual global power. Some internal problems impregnably working against India’s soft power image are the Kashmir issue, Maoist/Naxalite issue, the Northeast insurgent problems, Naga independent movement, politics of intolerance of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), farmer’s suicide, poverty, “beef politics”, etc. With all these problems at the backdrop, Aseema Sinha and Jon P. Dorschner question whether India is truly a rising power or a “mere revolution of

<sup>16</sup> Shashi Tharoor, “India as a Soft Power”, *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>19</sup> Kamal Mitra Chenoy and Anuradha M. Chenoy, “India’s Foreign Policy Shifts and the Calculus of Power”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 35, 2007, pp. 3547 & 3551.

rising expectations?" They discuss that as a rising power, India must find ways to keep in pace with the globalised international system by effectively responding to its domestic dilemmas and constraints.<sup>20</sup>

Many argue that before 2014, New Delhi does not employ its soft power systematically. However, in the post-2014, such argument seems to be undergoing radical changes because of the clever display of Narendra Modi's soft power ability. Realising that in today's information age, to make India more attractive and acceptable, its socio-cultural, economic and political ideals need to be disseminated to maximum local as well as foreign population. Therefore, with this vision the current Indian Government under the premiership of Narendra Modi has launched the projects like "Digital India", "Make in India", "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission)", etc. Harsh V. Pant by reporting the findings of Portland, a firm that studied 50 nations and ranked the top 30 for soft power – the UK ranked first; South Korea and China ranked 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> respectively,<sup>21</sup> also projected the growing influence of Narendra Modi. In his words: "While India does not make it to the top 30, the report singles out India's Narendra Modi with a special profile".<sup>22</sup> In fact, he credits Modi for a strategic promotion on India's ample soft power with Bollywood, yoga and democracy, and for striving to not only revive national pride in the country's ancient values, but also enhance India's hard power by using its soft power advantages.<sup>23</sup>

It is observed that Modi's plan of projecting India as a strong nation is ingeniously link with a firm and a strong foreign policy he is currently advocating. His foreign policy apparently focused on improving relations with the rest of the world but first starting with neighboring countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia and extending it to the Middle East. As such, in Modi's swearing-in ceremony all the SAARC leaders were invited. And within few months after assuming the responsibility as the Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014, Modi made many foreign trips which were strategically important for India in her endeavor to be an incredibly attractive and powerful country. For instance, between June and November 2014, Modi visited Bhutan, Brazil, Nepal, Japan, UN, USA, Myanmar, Australia and Fiji. In 2015, recorded numbers of his foreign trips were 30 times. In return, many foreign delegates including all the five permanent member of the United Nations sent their envoy to India. Political analysts observe that the hyper-energetic activities of Modi had prompted both domestic and foreign audiences to think more favorably of India and Modi's leadership.

However, all is definitely not well with Narendra Modi's panache. He is accused of romanticizing the ideology of RSS, the organisation often branded as pseudo- pluralism, pseudo-tolerance and pseudo-secularism. The RSS is a Hindu nationalist organisation that is the progenitor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)<sup>24</sup>, the ruling party of the current National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. The objective of the Hindu nationalist is to ensure that India becomes one of the poles of a multipolar system so that the past glory of India is resurrected and recurrence of past humiliation caused by foreign subjugation is prevented.<sup>25</sup> Modi is often accused of leaning lopsidedly towards the RSS's doctrine, sometimes even sacrificing the human rights of the civilians and overlooking the greater Indian principles of tolerance, secularism and pluralism. The flak against him was fundamentally based on the adverse Godhra riots of 2002 that subsequently led to the

<sup>20</sup> Aseema Sinha and Jon P. Dorschner, "India: Rising Power or a Mere Revolution of Rising Expectations", *Polity*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2010, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "New Delhi's Soft Power Push", <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/new-delhi%E2%80%99s-soft-power-push>, accessed on 16/02/2016.

<sup>22</sup> *Op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> *Op.cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Rahul Sagar, "State of Mind: What Kind of Power Will India Become?", *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 2009, p. 808.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 806.

banning of his American visa.

It was also asserted that after Modi became the Prime Minister of India in 2014, crimes that directly balance out the principles of tolerance and secularism safeguarded by the Indian Constitution were reported more frequently. For instance, some minority people were attacked on the suspicion of eating beef; churches were ransacked and burnt, and Christians were frequently victimized; the attacked on the Northeasterners mainly because of their Mongoloid features did not become any calmer; random racist assault against the African community in India became more intense. In short, of late, the bigotry of the BJP under the aegis of the RSS seems to be on the rise. As such, Shashi Tharoor rightly pointed out that “Make in India and hate in India cannot go together”.<sup>26</sup> He further said that if India wants to remain a source of attraction for the world, it must preserve the “precious pluralism like a civilizational asset. ...It is not good when some people begin to fear that it is safer to be a cow than to be a Muslim in India today”.<sup>27</sup>

### **Examining the Protracted Naga Imbroglio from the Prism of Soft Power**

“A country may have all the money and influence in the world, but it is its soft power that draws outsiders to visit or even relocate there”<sup>28</sup>, wrote Evelyn Fok. Bringing in this comment in Naga’s context, it can be perceived that the failure of the Naga people to emotionally link themselves with the ideas of “Indianness” even after more than 50 years of officially being “included” in Indian Union indicates that the wave of New Delhi’s soft power ability has not impacted the Nagas. For all these decades, Nagas had more been militarily influenced to obey the command of New Delhi. And when this military or “stick” influence seems not to work then occasionally they would switch to “carrot” influence simply with the intention to placate certain group of Nagas who were willing to obey New Delhi. But it has not sincerely tried to attract the Naga people towards its way of life. In this way, the Indian Government applied the inherited colonial policy of “divide and rule”. The recipe for this policy to thrive has always been appeasing some at the expense of the other.

Very frequently, Nagas claim that the word “tolerance” vis-à-vis tolerating diversity of ideas, opinions or interests had never been fully comprehended by the Indian leaders while dealing with the Nagas’ political issue. They argue that the intolerant and imperious attitude of the Indian Government imprinted a feeling of otherness. It may be pointed out that such feelings exist even today although the margin is considerably thinning out because of the impact of modernity and the positive feedbacks from Naga diaspora. In fact, the influence of Indian cinema and TV serials among the Naga hoi polloi, especially the female population, is remarkably helpful in appeasing the minds of Nagas to be not so hostile with the concept of “Indianness” anymore. Also Naga women find it comfortable wearing Indian dresses especially kurtis and shalwar and many Nagas like to eat Indian foods. All these indicate that the Nagas today find it easier to blend in with what was considered as the exclusive “Indian thing” some decades ago. Today, there are a large number of Naga youths either working or studying in all the important cities of India. The Naga diaspora community is largely responsible in changing (although the process is still slow) the hostile attitude of the elder Naga generation back home who had experienced many inhuman treatments in the hands of the Indian Army. Of late, there is a healthy sign of improvement in the relationship between the Naga people and the Indian Government, with more and more Naga diaspora community familiarizing with

<sup>26</sup> Shashi Tharoor, “Make in India and hate in India cannot go together”, <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-02-08/news/70450489> 1 digital-india-shashi-tharoor-soft-power, accessed on 16/02/2016.

<sup>27</sup> *Op.cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Evelyn Fok, “An expat’s view of India as a soft power”, <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-08/news/60943320> 1 soft-power-indians-entire-country, accessed on 16/02/2016.

Indian culture and Hindi language and bringing back the good story about India to the home population who are still vastly uncomfortable with New Delhi and her policy regarding the Nagas plight.

Arrogance is a dangerous factor that can destroy the values of soft power. It was arrogance of the Indian leaders that prompted the Nagas to raise the slogan like “we are Indians only by accident”. Such notion, however, seems to be metamorphosing especially after the 1997 ceasefire agreement between the Indian Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim and the subsequent signing of the Naga peace deal in 2015. Yet again, recent attacks on the Northeast people in general and Nagas in particular in some of the most advanced Indian metro cities just because of their mongoloid physical appearance and hurling insults like “Go back to China” act as a setback in furthering meaningful transformation.

Despite many odds, the Nagas consider the coming to power of Narendra Modi as the silver lining in their prolonged unresolved political situation. Such opinion may have been shaped because of certain ostensible features of Narendra Modi such as (a) charismatic personality; (b) strategic employment of soft power; and (c) the signing of the Naga peace deal. Decisiveness with a quick confident decision making is an extraordinary ability of Narendra Modi that attracts and gains the respect of the Nagas. It may be maintained that right after becoming the Prime Minister, Modi had extensively but strategically employed soft power both in dealing with domestic as well as foreign affairs. He has shown his capability on where to fish exactly that would help him in gaining the support of others. He also has shown on how to “shape the preferences of others” which Nye associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority.<sup>29</sup>

For the Nagas, soft power is about finding the right means to promote peace and stability by resolving their more than six decades running political conflict and bedlam. For this to become a reality they appear to be pinning their hope to Narendra Modi. This is mainly because of his role in signing the “historic” Naga peace deal on August 3, 2015 between the Centre and the NSCN headed by Isak and Muivah, the collective leadership of the Naga people. In his speech on this day, Modi admitted that “the Naga problem has taken so long to resolve because we did not understand each other... There were not many like Mahatma Gandhi, who loved the Naga people and was sensitive to their sentiments... Today’s agreement is a shining example of what we can achieve when we deal with each other in a spirit of equality and respect, trust and confidence; ...Today, we mark not merely the end of a problem but the beginning of a new future. We will not only try to heal wounds and resolve problems, but also be your partner as you restore your pride and prestige”.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, he brought up the Naga peace deal in his visit to UAE on August 16, 2015, commenting that “only a dialogue can bring a resolution to violence and terror”. Narendra Modi is the only Indian Prime Minister who uttered the highly esteem Naga slogan “Kuknalim” meaning “Victory to Our People and Land” during his maiden visit to Nagaland in 2014.

Another aspect that made Modi favorites among the Nagas is his “Act East Policy” that can directly impact the behaviour of Nagas. The “Act East Policy” was the modified version of the “Look East Policy” formulated during the Narashimha Rao’s government in 1992. It was modified in order to emphasise that New Delhi would take a more proactive and strategic role in the Southeast Asian region. The “Act East Policy” is the scheme of New Delhi to forge a better economic engagement, to establish a stronger partnership and security cooperation with this region. And it will work only

<sup>29</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Full Text: PM Modi’s Speech on historic deal between Centre, NSCN-IM, <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/politics/full-text-pm-modis-speech-on-historic-deal-between-centre-nscn-im-1029728.html>, accessed on 31/03/2016.

if long-festering problems like the Naga imbroglio are sorted out.<sup>31</sup> On the “Act East Policy”, Modi also pronounced that the Nagas are the guardians of the eastern frontiers and the gateway to the world beyond.<sup>37</sup>

At present, Modi’s soft power charm is positively influencing the thought process of the Nagas. His ideologies of “ahimsa parmo dharma (non-violence is the supreme duty)”, “sarv dharma sambhav (equal respect to all religion)”, and “vasudeva kutukbakam (the world is one family)”<sup>38</sup> is selling very well among the Nagas. In gist, in order to transform the long-dragging conflicting situation in Nagaland, Indian Government need to judiciously apply its soft power policy and offer an attractive, practical, and honorable framework that would help the Naga leaders and their hoi polloi to permanently abandon the path of violent bloodshed and embrace peace.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the backdrop of the Naga peace accord, the inward as well as the outward excitement of the Naga people is whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi could be the Indian leader who, at last, would resolve the protracted Naga imbroglio? In the relationship between the Nagas and the Indian Government, the latter had often employed military solution too readily and peaceful means too scantily. This manuscript by discussing on Modi’s soft power ability attempts to demonstrate that New Delhi should change its tactics of employing hard military power and be replaced by appealing soft power in order to give peace and development a chance in Nagaland. Had the Indian political leaders applied the principles of tolerance, non-violence, respect for plurality, peaceful approach to any kind of problems, etc. as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, then perhaps, the Naga conflict would have been resolved long ago.

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<sup>31</sup> Subir Bhaumik, “The Naga peace accord: The test lies in making it work”, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/naga-peace-accord-the-test-lies-in-making-it-work/story-OYiu9oPxwLRrmceGisrNtN.html>, accessed on 31/03/2016.

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